

PROPOSED USE OF THE PLENARY POWERS TO SUPPRESS THE NAME "TYRANNULA" SWAINSON, 1827, AND TO DESIGNATE A TYPE SPECIES FOR "MYIOBIUS" DARWIN, 1839 (CLASS AVES)

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The object of the present application is to ask the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature to use its plenary powers to vary the normal operation of the Rules for the purpose of preventing the confusion and disturbance in long established nomenclatural practice if those rules were to be applied strictly to the names *Tyrannula* Swainson, 1827, and *Myiobius* Darwin, 1839 (Class Aves).

2. The relevant facts concerning the foregoing names are as follows. Darwin published the name *Myiobius* (July 1839, *Zool. Voy. "Beagle"* 3(9): 46) to replace the name *Tyrannula* Swainson, 1827, which he regarded as an invalid junior homonym of *Tyrannulus* Vieillot, 1816 (*Analyse*: 31). Darwin did not designate a type species for *Myiobius*, but in 1840 Gray (G. R.) (*List Gen. Birds*: 30) selected *Muscicapa "barbatus"* Gmelin (i.e. *Muscicapa barbata* Gmelin, 1788, in Linnaeus, *Syst. Nat.* (ed. 13) 1: 933) as the type species of this genus. At the same time Gray, following Darwin, placed *Tyrannula* Swainson in the synonymy both of *Myiobius* Darwin and of *Pyrocephalus* Gould, [1839].

3. The foregoing arrangement has been followed by subsequent workers with little disagreement, and *Myiobius* has been current for over a century. One of the decisions taken by the International Congress of Zoology (on the recommendation of the Commission) at Paris in 1948, though, in itself, quite acceptable, has, however, introduced a complication in the present case, which, if not remedied in the manner now suggested, would have objectionable results. The decision in question was that under which a generic name published before 1st January, 1931, is to be accepted as having been published with an indication, if the names of previously established species are cited under the new generic name, even if no description of any kind was given for the new genus (see 1950, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* 4: 80).

4. The generic name *Tyrannula* was first published by Swainson with a formal description in a paper published in December 1827 (*Zool. J.* 3: 358). Among the species referred to *Tyrannula* in this paper was *Muscicapa barbata* Gmelin, which (as already noted) Gray later selected as the type species of the substitute genus *Myiobius* Darwin, thereby establishing it also as the type species of *Tyrannula* Swainson, if the paper of December 1827 had been the first valid publication of that name. Unfortunately, however, the December paper was preceded by another published in May 1827 (*Phil. Mag.* (n.s.) 1(5)

367-368). (One aspect of the problem raised by the May paper was dealt with by the Commission in its *Opinion* 30, published in 1911 (*Smithson. Publ.* **2013** : 69-72).) In this paper Swainson used the name *Tyrannula* for eight species but did not provide a generic description. Of the eight species then referred to *Tyrannula*, five were then described for the first time, two were cited from Gmelin, and one was described but tentatively identified with one of Vieillot's earlier described species. Under the new ruling referred to above, the name *Tyrannula* Swainson of May 1827 is an available name, since its components were specified by the original author. The species *Muscicapa barbata* Gmelin was not among the species placed by Swainson in the genus *Tyrannula* in May 1827 and it cannot therefore be accepted as the type species of this genus. No other species has however been suggested to fill that role.

5. Contrary to the view held by Darwin and later by Gray, the name *Tyrannula* Swainson is not a homonym of *Tyrannulus* Vieillot and is, in fact, an available name. Under normal procedures, its type species must be one or other of the eight species cited by Swainson in his paper of May 1827. This would however involve three highly undesirable elements. First, although the exact specific identity of two of these species is uncertain, it seems probable that they, like the other six, belong to one or other of the genera now known as *Myiarchus*, *Contopus*, *Empidonax*, *Myiozetetes*, and *Pyrocephalus*. All these genera were established after 1827, and the selection as the type species of *Tyrannula* of any of the eight species referred to that genus by Swainson in May 1827 would therefore necessitate the replacement of one of these long-established names. Second, the selection of any of these species as the type species of *Tyrannula* would involve the proposal of a new name for the century-old genus *Myiobius* Darwin. Third, confusion would be bound to arise if the names *Tyrannula* Swainson and *Tyrannulus* Vieillot were both valid names for genera in the same family.

6. The name *Myiobius* Darwin was unquestionably proposed as a substitute name for *Tyrannula* Swainson (though of what date is uncertain) and it would be undesirable to disregard the method by which it was proposed, more especially in view of the fact that Darwin did not cite *Muscicapa barbata* Gmelin under his *Myiobius*, and, in consequence, Gray's selection of that species as the type species of this genus would in that event be unacceptable. Moreover, none of the species which were cited by Darwin under *Myiobius* is now considered to belong to this genus. The six species in question are now distributed among five genera, of which only one (*Elaenia* Sundevall [1836]) is older than *Myiobius* but more recent than *Tyrannula*. There is moreover nothing in Darwin's account to suggest that he and Gould considered the proposed *Myiobius* as having special application to *barbata* Gmelin, except through *Tyrannula* Swainson.

7. Since the strict application of the normal rules in the Code would involve several changes in old, established generic names and would leave in the same family two generic names differing only in endings of gender, I believe that this is a case where the International Commission should use its plenary powers to set aside the ordinary rules and maintain the existing accepted nomenclature in this group.

8. I accordingly recommend the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature :—

(1) to use its plenary powers :—

(a) to suppress the generic name *Tyrannula* Swainson, May 1827, for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy ;

(b) to set aside all selections of type species made prior to the decision now proposed to be taken for the genus *Myiobius* Darwin, 1839, and, having done so, to designate *Muscicapa barbata* Gmelin, 1788, to be the type species of the foregoing genus ;

(2) to place the name *Myiobius* Darwin, 1839 (type species, by designation under the plenary powers, as proposed in (1)(b) above : *Muscicapa barbata* Gmelin, 1788) on the *Official List of Generic Names in Zoology* ;

(3) to place the name *Tyrannula* Swainson, May 1827, as proposed, under (1)(a) above, to be suppressed under the plenary powers, on the *Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology* ;

(4) to place the trivial name *barbata* Gmelin, 1788 (as published in the binominal combination *Muscicapa barbata*) on the *Official List of Specific Trivial Names in Zoology*.